

ARE THE MODERN VERSIONS IN ERROR IN 2 SAMUEL 21:19?

May 29, 2000 (David Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org) -- I recently received the following e-mail from a subscriber to the Fundamental Baptist Information Service:

"In both Gail Riplinger's Book 'New Age Bible Translations' and several of your published books is an error. In 1 Samuel 17:4, 1 Samuel 17:23, 1 Samuel 21:9, and 1 Samuel 22:10 a giant that is killed by David named Goliath is mentioned. In 2 Samuel 21:19 confusion is created when another Israelite is said to have killed Goliath but 1 Chronicles 20:5 appears to resolve the matter by saying that the second Goliath mentioned in 2 Samuel 21:19 was the brother of the Goliath killed by David. It is claimed by many King James Onlyites including yourself that many modern English translations get it wrong. Since the King James Bible gets it right it is superior to the modern English translations because it is more accurate.

"A tradition in English Bibles was started by the Geneva Bible that words added by the translators were given in italics. The King James Bible and many other modern English Bibles continue this tradition of using italics to identify words added by the translators.

"Using an old 1917 Scofield King James Bible, I note that 2 Samuel 21:19 reads as follows: 'And there was again a battle in Gob with the Philistines, where Elbanan the son of Jaare-oregim, a Beth-lehemite, slew [the brother of] Goliath the Gittite, the staff of whose spear was like a weaver's beam.' The words 'the brother of' is in italics indicating that the King James Translators added these English words to the original Hebrew manuscript. So, the King James Bible is being considered more accurate than the modern English translations for adding words that do not exist in the original Hebrew manuscript. I ask the question; 'Which is a more accurate translation? A translation that accurately translates the Hebrew to English or one that adds words that do not exist in the original Hebrew manuscript?'

"I note that David killed Goliath at Shochoh in Judah which is near Azekah in Ephes-dammim. There is the appearance that the two Goliaths were not killed at the same physical location and it is clear that they were not killed at the same battle between Israel and the Philistines. So...why is such a big deal being made out of the fact that there appears to be two giants having the same name? Is there really an error in the modern English Bibles? Or is there the appearance of an error that the King James Onlyites love to use against the modern English Bibles?

“At the risk of sounding like a Liberal or a Modernist, why is such a big deal being made of this matter? Why do King James Onlyites not admit that words in italics were added to the Bible by the King James Translators. As I recall there is a Bible verse that warns against adding words to God's Word. So, does this curse in the Bible against those that add words that do not appear in the original Hebrew manuscripts apply to the King James Translators? No, they carefully made it clear by the use of italics that these words were added. However, does the curse apply to those that teach that the King James Bible's words in italics are as much God's word as the words that are not in italics?

“Be very careful in your use of words in italics in the King James Bible.”

REPLY FROM BRO. CLOUD

I will ignore the mocking, condescending tone of your e-mail and will give a reply anyway. Usually I ignore such correspondence because the very tone of it is not conducive to edifying communication. Be that as it will, let me reply.

First of all, you are wrong in saying that several of my books address 2 Samuel 21:19. To my knowledge, this is mentioned in only one of my books.

Second, what Mrs. Riplinger says or does not say about something has nothing to do with me. I have never recommended her writings, quoted her, or used her writings as a resource.

Third, 1 Chronicles 20:5 does not say there were two Goliaths. It says Goliath had a brother named Lahmi. Thus your attempt at reconciliation fails. You said, “... why is such a big deal being made out of the fact that there appears to be two giants having the same name?” There appears no such thing.

Fourth, the facts you give about the use of special type for interpolations in Bible translations is inaccurate. The 1560 Geneva was not the first Bible, English or otherwise, to set apart added words by the use of special type. The Sabastian Münster Latin translation of 1534 is generally regarded as the first translation to incorporate special type or brackets to mark interpolations. Olivetan's French Bible of 1535 used smaller type, as did the Great Bible of 1540. Further, you are wrong in claiming that “many other modern versions” use italics to identify words that have been added. In fact, most modern versions have dropped the use of italics. The modern English versions are typically much looser than the King James Bible and add and subtract countless things, but, unlike the KJV translators, they do not allow the English reader to know what they are doing.

Fifth, as for the use of italics in the King James Bible, a good discussion of this is found in *The Authorized Edition of the English Bible (1611), Its Subsequent Reprints and Modern Representatives*, by FR.H.A. Scrivener, 1884. A reprint is available from Bible for Today, 900 Park Ave., Collingswood, NJ 08108.

Sixth, I do believe you have a point when you say it is wrong to charge the modern versions with error because they omit the words “the brother of” from 2 Sam. 21:19. If that is error, the Tyndale Bible (he completed that part of the Old Testament before he was put to death), the Geneva Bible, the Luther German Bible, and most other Bibles based on the Received Text are guilty of the same error.

Seventh, the defense of the King James Bible and its Received Text does not depend upon 2 Samuel 21:19. That is a very minor point one way or the other. All men are fallible, and that is true for defenders of the King James Bible AND for those who defend the modern versions. You made several errors in one short e-mail. I have built one of the largest libraries on this subject in North America and have looked at all sides of the Bible version debate, and I have found mistakes in books written from every perspective. I readily admit that I have made mistakes and I need to be challenged about my writings. Human error does not discount a position, though, and a wise man does not strain out gnats to swallow camels.

Finally, for the truth’s sake I suggest you stop using the term “King James Onlyites,” which you have adopted from the enemies of those who are defending the King James Bible against the modern versions. It is a term which was cleverly created to prejudice the minds of people against the defenders of the King James Bible and to make them out to be a cultic group. It is a label that is ill defined and frequently used slanderously. Many men who are labeled “King James Onlyites” are no such thing, because they believe any good translation of the Received Text in any language is the preserved Word of God. How that position could be labeled “King James Onlyite” is a great puzzle to me; but it is and this tells me there is often a malicious motive behind the use of this label. I have discussed this in my book “Examining James White’s the King James Only Controversy.” This can be ordered from Way of Life Literature, 1701 Harns Rd., Oak Harbor, WA 98277. 360-675-8311 (voice), fbns@wayoflife.org (e-mail).